

veterans and many patriotic citizens of our great land sacrificed and fought to protect the freedom it symbolizes.

This amendment to protect our flag is an appropriate and powerful "thank you" to every veteran who fought and died to defend this flag and the country for which it stands. This flag is a national asset.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. QUINN). The time of the gentleman from Tennessee has expired.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 additional minute to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. CLEMENT).

Mr. CLEMENT. Mr. Speaker, that is very gracious of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS), knowing the gentleman does not necessarily agree with my position totally, but he has always been fair as one of the great leaders in the House of Representatives.

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This flag is a national asset, and I strongly believe it deserves our unquestioned respect and protection.

I pledge my full support for this amendment, and I hope that my colleagues will vote to support its passage.

I have heard from a lot of veterans at home, but not just veterans. I have heard from people from all walks of life. Mr. Speaker, we have a lot to be proud of in this country. We celebrated our 200th birthday in 1976. I would ask my colleagues, do they know what the average longevity of the great democracies of the past is? It is 200 years. We celebrated our 200th birthday in 1976. But if we want to celebrate our 300th birthday, we have to rededicate and recommit ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, what I said a while ago is the way I feel. Yes, one can protest. Yes, one can disagree. Yes, one can feel strongly on a particular issue. But one does not have to burn "Old Glory." One can show one's protest, one can show one's frustration in other ways. Support this amendment.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PLATTS).

(Mr. PLATTS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PLATTS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents and my late father, Judge Platts, an Army veteran who felt very strongly about protecting the American flag from desecration, I rise in full support of this proposal.

House Joint Resolution 36 is important for many reasons. The American flag is of great importance not only to the men and women of the United States of America but also to the citizens of the world.

Every time we raise or lower the many flags flown all over the world, we have given thanks and shown appreciation not only to our veterans who fought and gave their lives to ensure

the freedoms we know today but to the many citizens who work daily to preserve those freedoms. Desecration of this commanding symbol, whether it is by burning, tearing, or other mutilation, undermines the powerful sense of patriotism that Americans feel whenever they see the red, white and blue. To many, desecrating the American flag not only destroys the cloth, it also destroys the memories and destroys the memories and devotion thousands of veterans and others carry with them throughout their daily lives.

In this day of world conflict, we must remember that the Stars and Stripes has been a force that holds communities together. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM) that "The American flag is a national treasure. It is the ultimate symbol of freedom, equal opportunity, and religious tolerance. Amending our Constitution to protect the flag is a necessity."

Mr. Speaker, I look to our Founding Fathers and how they treated the flag as to whether they thought the first amendment should protect burning the flag, desecrating the flag. When they went into battle, a soldier would carry the flag; and if that soldier fell, another soldier would put down their weapon and pick up the flag. That is a pretty clear indication that they did not intend the first amendment to protect desecration of the flag.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote and hope that we will have a very strong bipartisan vote in favor of this proposal.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HOSTETTLER).

(Mr. HOSTETTLER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOSTETTLER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this proposed constitutional amendment. The need for such an amendment arises from a Supreme Court that has persistently stated that we must tolerate flag desecration as protected speech. Clearly, I believe the Supreme Court has it wrong.

The flag is a unique symbol that merits our special recognition. I find it ironic that the Federal Government can compel men and women into the Armed Forces where they may die under the flag but, evidently, may not prohibit the desecration of the very symbol for which they fight.

This proposed amendment places the debate exactly where our framers intended for it to take place: in the town halls across America. It is the American people, not the Supreme Court, that have the ultimate responsibility to answer constitutional questions.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the flag is a unique symbol. When those who have given the last full measure of devotion are given the respect they deserve, we honor them by draping their coffin

with the flag. They honor our country with their sacrifice, and we honor them with the flag.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, I find the words of the Pledge of Allegiance telling. Just last week, President Bush had the opportunity to visit Ellis Island and to lead the crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance, just as so many immigrants have done before: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic, for which it stands." I would underscore that this simple phrase recited every morning in this very Chamber pledges our allegiance to the flag itself, not only to the Republic. The "and" separates the two phrases so that we pledge our devotion both to the flag and to our Republic.

Mr. Speaker, some argue that the ideals of the flag are the only things that matter. I find the words of the pledge enlightening, and I respectfully disagree.

The flag itself occupies a unique place in our Republic. It is the one symbol that merits our allegiance. Why do we continue to pledge our devotion and support to a flag if we are not willing to protect it from desecration?

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the proposed amendment.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Virginia (Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS).

Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Joint Resolution 36 proposing a constitutional amendment that would grant Congress the power to prohibit the physical desecration of the United States flag.

The American flag is a revered symbol of our country and of the principles of freedom and liberty we hold dear. I know for America's war veterans the flag is valued as a symbol of the sacrifices they and their fellow servicemen made to defend our land. Indeed, hundreds of thousands of servicemen gave their lives defending our country, and we must never forget the price they paid for the freedoms we enjoy.

As a member of the House Committee on Armed Services, it is our priority to restore our military's readiness and strength and also ensure that our veterans are treated with the respect and gratitude that is due them. That includes standing with them to defend the honor due to our national colors.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this resolution.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BROWN).

Mr. BROWN of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this important piece of legislation and I applaud the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM) for his tireless advocacy on this issue.

Justice John Paul Stevens, speaking for the Supreme Court minority opinion in the United States v. Eichman in 1990 stated, "Thus, the government may, indeed, it should, protect the